

"An alternative to reacting only out of anger and pain is to ask, 'what is the most healing thing to do?' The answer can be found in listening to victims screaming to have their pain, anger and grief acknowledged, and in creating opportunities for offenders to be accountable. If we're looking for healing and accountability, we'll find it where it can truly happen — between victims and offenders in dialogue with one another."

*David Doerfler, Founder
Concentric Journeys*

Victims' Voices

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An alternative

For healing and

"meaning"

making



from

**VIOLENT
CRIME**

**Victim-centered
Victim-initiated
Victim-driven
dialogue services
with felony
offenders**

Why would a victim want to meet with an offender?

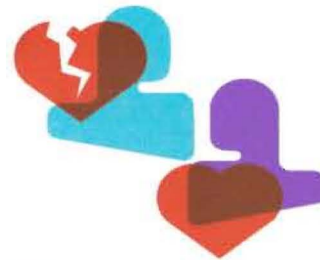
- Often victims have questions that only the offender can answer, such as: "Why did you pick me?" "What actually happened?" "What were my loved one's last words?"
- To tell the offender about how their lives have been impacted by the offender's criminal behavior, and their feelings about the crime
- To know what led the offender to do what he/she did, and about whether and how he or she has changed since being incarcerated

Why would an offender want to meet with a victim?

- An opportunity to hear and understand more about exactly what was *done* to the victim
- An opportunity to see and understand how different or similar his/her own experience is to the victim's
- When offenders finally look into the eyes of their victims and see the effects of their actions, they know remorse like never before. Sometimes it can be enough to turn their lives around

What is Victim Offender Dialogue?

Victim Offender Dialogue is a process in which the victim of a violent crime and the offender who committed the offense meet. The focus is on the deep harms done to the victim, the offender's personal responsibility for those harms, and on ways the offender can help reduce the effects of those harms.



Thomas Ann's Story

[Thomas Ann] told him, "If the only thing good that comes out of burying Paul is that you turn your life around, then Paul will not have died in vain." Her tears flowed as she continued, "If it had not been Paul, it would have been someone else."

"I just hate it," he said, "that I brought all this pain in your life."

And so commenced a conversation that was to begin to restore two individuals whose lives had become inextricably entwined thirteen years before. "I went in there totally for *me*," admits [Ms.] Hines, "but it changed for me as he *listened* to me, and I *listened* to him."

Thomas Ann Hines, mother of Paul
"Crying for Justice" by Jon Wilson,
www.justalternatives.org

The Dialogue Process

- All dialogues are victim initiated; offenders cannot initiate dialogue.
- Offenders voluntarily agree to participate in the process.
- Victims will be asked to discuss their reasons for wishing to initiate Victim Offender Dialogue.
- Because Victim Offender Dialogue is not for everyone each case is reviewed by the Victim Services Director. The Victim Services Director and the Warden where the offender is located will make the final decision.
- Dialogue preparation can take anywhere from several months to years before an actual meeting takes place.
- Dialogues are not available in domestic violence, sex crimes, or death row cases.
- A facilitator meets with both the victim and offender individually to prepare for dialogue.
- Victims and offenders are encouraged to have support persons available to them throughout the process.
- The Victim Offender Dialogue process does not in any way affect the offender's sentence, classification, or release-date status, and it will not circumvent any Department policy.